



making families happen

## My Adventure in China

By Annika (10 yrs old)

When my parents first told me we were going to adopt a brother or sister from China, my first thought was, WOW. I was ecstatic. It was alarming and good at the same time. After a bit, I kind of forgot about the adoption because it took so long, until my parents started taking 'classes.' Then reality clicked in. When we found out we were adopting a boy named Yi Hong, I was stunned for a minute, and then the celebration started. Here are some parts of my diary that I wrote during our trip to China to meet Asher YiHong.

### June 28 2016

We are in China! We woke up at 8:00am and got ready. By 10:00am, we were at the airport. After lunch we prepared for the 15-hour plane ride. We had a lot of things to entertain us, but even then, I still didn't fall asleep for a while. When we landed in China we realized that some of our luggage was still in Toronto! We had a laugh out of that! Then we went for dinner and I had tofu! (YUM!)

### June 29 2016

I woke up still adjusting to Chinese time. A few hours later, we went downstairs for breakfast. WOW! One word, a lot of meaning! I tried many foods, such as: Green Tea Cakes, (yum) Hard Boiled Eggs steeped in Tea, (yum) Dragon fruit,

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*Annika and Asher*



(not my favorite) and much more! After breakfast, we went to the Pearl Oriental Tower. It is kind of like the CN tower. There was a "glass room" that had glass floors, walls and so much more! Some random strangers there took pictures of us and touched my brother and sister's hair, which was mostly OK.

#### June 30 2016

After a train ride, we went to lunch, where Ruby and I had fish eggs, they were very yummy! They tasted like popping candy. On the way to visit a factory, we had to go to the bathroom. The bathroom was a hole in the ground!



#### July 1

I practiced lots with chopsticks. I am getting very good at it. There was donkey stew! I avoided that. Today we ate waxberries, which are grown only in one area of China, they are delicious and taste like a mixture of strawberries and cherries

#### July 3

We are now in Guangzhou, the city where we will meet Yi Hong. Our hotel was nice, the breakfast buffet was sooo good. After church we got a foot massage, it was HOT water, but overall it was relaxing.

#### July 4

Today we adopted YiHong/Asher! He is adorable. When we got to the hotel, we figured out right away that Yi Hong loves to stack toy cups. We then used the cups to get YiHong to walk. After supper, Asher kept on hitting me with an empty water bottle, which made him laugh. Don't worry, it didn't hurt.

#### July 5

Today was another adorable day with Asher. Today, Asher Yihong Stoter



*Jacob and Asher*

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became officially ours. We got his picture for his visa and passport. We also took Asher in the pool for (we think) for the first time. He loved it. At first, my mom told us not to splash Asher, but then he started slapping the water with his hands and spraying water all over his head and body. He was so cute.

### July 6

Today was sorta sad. We went to the orphanage, there were many kids with disabilities. It was kinda uncomfortable, but they were very cute. It made me sad thinking about the parents that left their children on the street. When we saw where Asher slept, he started crying, I guess he thought we were leaving him there. He refused to go down any slides at the orphanage playground. We saw where he was dropped off, it made me teary eyed. Today for breakfast I had papaya fruit, I don't like it. Today for dinner we had Dim Sum and chicken feet soup, Yuck.



*Asher and Ruby*

### July 7

Today was 'rad,' we went to the safari park. There were koalas, giraffes, white tigers, pandas cheetahs etc. My favourite part was when the real looking T-Rex spit mist. My second favorite part was seeing Asher look around at everything with his big eyes.

### July 8

Today we went shopping; I know that sounds boring, but it was awesome. The first stop we bought a wall hanging for Asher, we also got personal stamps for each of us with our English name as well as our Chinese character name. It had our birth year animal on top.

### July 9

Today we traveled to Beijing on the plane, after the plane ride we found out we were going to ride

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on a bus the entire week, Cool! At the new hotel, I tried Chinese 'pizza;' it does not have sauce or cheese. It does not agree with my taste buds!

#### July 10

Today was very busy, checking Asher out at the medical clinic. Then, we went to the Hutong tour on rickshaws, it was pretty. Then we went for lunch and made dumplings. Before super we went to an acrobat show, it was awesome. On the bus ride home, Asher sat with me and I told him stories.

#### July 12

Today, we went to the Great Wall of China, it was super windy and cold on the wall. Dad and I were the only ones who stayed on and climbed super high on the wall, it got super high. After a tiring walk up, we had to go down, Uugh.

Now, life in my house hasn't changed too much. We have to watch where Asher is walking and we need to carry him some places. His diapers can be surprisingly smelly. But all that is immediately forgotten when you look at this adorable toddler. He melts my heart. He's my BROTHER!



*Our Family*



**2018  
South Korea**

## FEELING THE OLYMPIC SPIRIT!

Call out to Canadian Korean-Adoptee hockey players

- Gathering interest for South Korea, Winter Olympics 2018

*Dear Families,*

*Mike Lafond, a CB Korean parent, is looking for CB families interested in participating in a "Hockey Cultural Exchange" trip to Korea during the 2018 Winter Olympics (hosted in South Korea). Please see below message from Mike. If you are seriously interested or would like more information please email him directly as noted below. He's looking to receive replies by early September 2016.*

Hi:

My name is Mike Lafond. My wife Laura and I adopted our son Russell in 2004. He is now 13 and playing A/AA Rep hockey as a goalie. We live in Woodstock. I have a crazy idea that I am looking for participants for.

I had the idea that it would be really cool to put together one or two teams of Korean adoptees to go over there around the time of the Olympics to spread the Gospel according to St. Sydney. I figure if there are enough participants that one team would be Atom/Peewee, and the other team Bantam/Midget, boys and girls welcome. I think 7 to 10 days would be about the length of this and there will be a need for coaching staff. I have only house league qualifications.

There are only about 2100 people playing hockey in Korea. I expect most are in Seoul. I would see this as a "Cultural Exchange". Our teams could run clinics for the local teams and then play against them.

We just returned from a Motherland tour in which I had the opportunity to meet and talk to the Canadian Ambassador Eric Walsh. He indicated that there was already some planning going on around an idea like mine, and he encouraged me to pursue the idea. I suspect the planning in Korea was not focused on adoptees, however since I have brought this idea forward that might change. He indicated that by the fall plans would be more solid and that should I get support at this end that I should contact him with the results.

Quick estimates of the cost would be around \$200000 for 40 people. Getting sponsorship is a must. According to Mr. Walsh if this idea gets tied to the Olympics then sponsorship is limited to official Olympic sponsors, so I think it would be best to avoid that tie. I think large corporate sponsor(s) will be the order of the day and I don't think there would be an issue getting media coverage here and over there. Our Motherland tour was covered on KBS. I have also been given the suggestion that any town that has a OLG casino of any size has an obligation to support local causes. A person on the Motherland tour mentioned that he had secured \$25000 to send an athlete to Italy for a competition.

Please respond directly to me with your child's information.

Mike Lafond

[steamfoamer163@gmail.com](mailto:steamfoamer163@gmail.com)

I know people are away at this time of year, but I would like to see early/mid September as the deadline to contact me. Given that I have no idea how many people will respond to this, at this time I can only say all levels of play are welcome. If the response is underwhelming then perhaps only one team, if on the other hand... perhaps more. I really have no idea what I am going to get.





**Contact: Darlene Catton,**

Tel: (905) 836-6776,

Email [Darlene.Catton@childrensbridge.com](mailto:Darlene.Catton@childrensbridge.com)

#### **Homeland Visit - China**

Think about group homeland visits organized by The Children's Bridge, an adoption agency with over 20 years of experience working and travelling in China.

#### **Why go on a homeland visit with your child?**

Travelling to your child's country of birth to learn about his/her heritage is an irreplaceable experience. It can open the door for discussions about his/her culture and adoption. I know, from first-hand experience with my children that it instils a sense of pride built on direct contact. The trip makes the culture a lively, rich reality far more tangible for a child than sporadic celebrations at occasional events. Visiting China makes your child a participant in the culture of an evolving and exciting country rather than being a distant observer of a far off "foreign" land. The trip sends a strong message that your family values China and its place in your family history.

#### **How old should my child be?**

Children's Bridge Homeland Visits are open to adoptees 6 years and older at the time of the trip.

#### **Should I visit the orphanage with my child?**

A trip to China does not have to include a visit to your child's orphanage. That decision is yours to make in the best interest of your child. Most families do choose to visit their child's orphanage. I will be happy to talk to you in a general way about the variety of encounters.

#### **Can I visit both of my children's orphanage cities?...**

Yes, there is time built in to the itinerary for families to visit 2 orphanage cities.

## **China Homeland Visit Testimonial**

*Hi Darlene!*

*We arrived home late last night (or was it early this morning)! I do not have words to describe how amazing our trip was!! We had such a great time and it all went smoothly without a hitch thanks to your wonderful planning!*

*I am sorry we weren't in touch during the trip. I did try to email a few times but we seemed to have trouble with wifi and internet, but that was the only trouble we had.*

*I will share some pictures once we go through them. Right now I am working on laundry and trying to adjust to not having a buffet and maid service.*

*Thank you..thank you...thank you!!!!!!!*

*Heather*  
[heather.coholan@eastlink.ca](mailto:heather.coholan@eastlink.ca)

**Download the MARCH  
2017 China Homeland  
Visit Package!**



# South Korea Homeland Visit - July 2016

Richard, Shannon, Matthew and Gregory

One afternoon in March, I searched for Children's Bridge online and sent off a message, hoping to reconnect. Maria Fulford telephoned right away, and we talked at length and reminisced. It was so gratifying to hear her voice again, as she had been so kind, encouraging and knowledgeable as we went through the adoption process many years ago. Maria mentioned the Homeland tour coming up in July, and we knew right away this was a wonderful opportunity and took the plunge.

We were overjoyed to learn in just a few days, that our sons' respective foster mothers were willing to meet with us in Seoul. I was looking forward to introducing the boys once again to their foster mothers, and wanted these special women to know that the boys are happy and healthy, and that Richard and I continue to do our best to raise them with the love and care that the foster mothers had so graciously provided during the boys' early days. We were also keenly aware that we had not done enough to stay in contact.

To our surprise, our sons were more excited about the prospect of visiting Korea than I had expected. Although neither had ever commented on the fact that there are only a handful of Asian children in their schools, one of their first questions was whether people in Korea look like they do, and would Richard and I be the ones who looked "different". Thus began our preparations for our journey. Our younger son and I spent hours at the computer, trying to learn a bit of Hangul, using an online service available through our public library. Apparently we weren't too successful. I tried out some phrases with a Korean-American business owner in our neighbourhood, but was regularly advised that the Korean I was using was too "familiar" and that I needed to learn a more respectful tone.

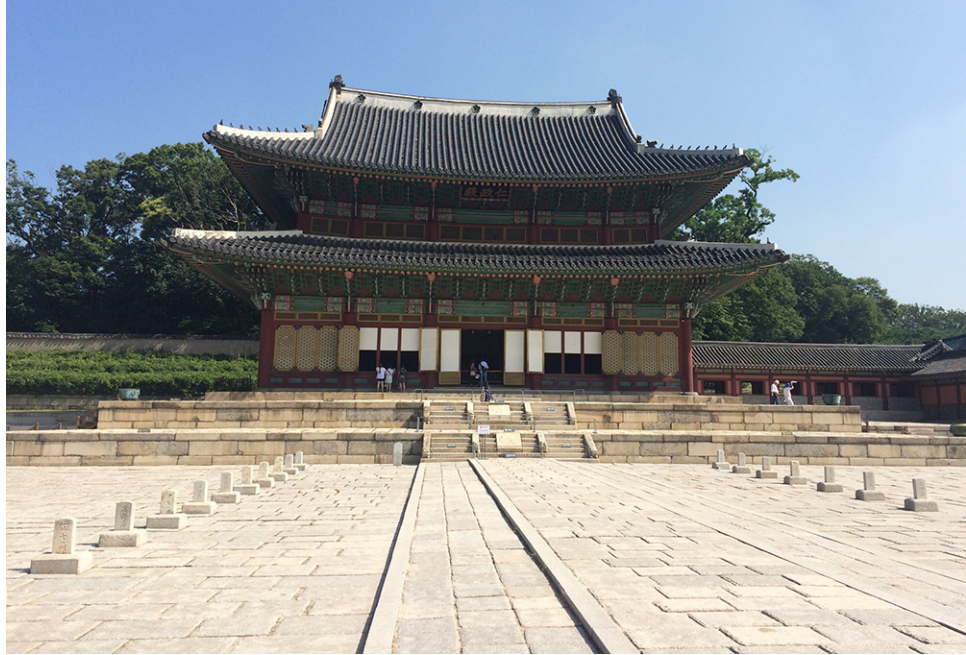
We checked in at O'Hare early in the morning of June 28 for a flight which would change our lives once again. Soon after our arrival in Seoul, we were to meet the boys' foster mothers at the pizza restaurant owned by our older son's foster family.

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I was very nervous as we approached the restaurant, but I needn't have been. We were greeted with great warmth, and our boys were immediately wrapped in big hugs. We were deeply moved by the love shown by the foster mothers to our boys. Their willingness to care so tenderly for the babies entrusted to them by the SWS, and the courage they show in sending these children out into the world, is humbling. Our reacquaintance felt like a beautiful family reunion, filled with stories, laughter and caring. It felt like no time had passed, even though eight years had gone by since our last visit to Seoul. We were struck by how aligned our boys were with the temperaments of their respective foster mothers- our older son is quiet, intuitive and thoughtful; our younger is an outgoing and energetic presence, who fills the room with laughter, just like his foster mother and kindergartenteacher "foster sister".



The next day brought us to the SWS. We were introduced to one of the social workers, who presented us to the SWS President, and were shown an informative video concerning the work of the SWS. Having the opportunity to show our boys the baby receiving nursery was a special treat, and an important connection to their personal history. In essence, we felt we had come full circle in the adoption experience, being able to return to the place where it all began. Following the SWS visit came several days of touring, both within Seoul and outside of it. Our tour guide was incredible- not only did he speak even idiomatic English fluently, his knowledge of our destinations was exhaustive. It also didn't hurt that he is an expert driver. He had a remarkable way of knowing when the boys needed a bit of a break from the walking or the heat, and it wasn't unusual for him to momentarily disappear, only to return holding a couple of ice cream cones.



Our visit to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and adjacent sites was very moving and the most sombre experience of our trip. The information panels outline the toll exacted on the country as a result of the Korean War and family separation, and express wishes for peace on the Korean peninsula. On the day of our visit, we were joined on the tour bus by several American veterans who had served in the Korean War. One of these gentlemen informed us that he had been

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captured during the second week of the conflict, and had spent three years as a prisoner of war very near the DMZ site. The visiting American veterans received a formal welcome from the South Korean soldiers patrolling at the DMZ in recognition of their service.

One of the highlights of our homeland tour was the opportunity to see Mt.Seoraksan and to hike to the summit of this beautiful national park. By this time, the rain had subsided and we had a few clear days. The natural beauty of the park was breathtaking, and we thoroughly enjoyed the fresh air and expansive vistas. We also had the chance to visit Naksan Beach, a wide, sandy beach on the Eastern Sea. The water was refreshing. We had a fresh seafood lunch seated on the floor in a traditional Korean restaurant followed by tasty coffee and ice cream. Full disclosure-we skipped the National Folk Museum to build time in the itinerary for the beach, but it was exactly what we needed at that point.

One of the foster mothers and family rejoined us for the last day of our visit to Seoul, which included time spent in Insa-dong shopping for traditional artifacts. We provided our email address to one of the art galleries and are receiving regular messages showcasing the Korean artists featured in that gallery. Now if I could only read the Hangul characters...

*We are very grateful to have participated in the homeland tour, a journey to reconnect to this vibrant and beautiful homeland, which has so much meaning for our family.*





# Welcome

## SOUTH KOREA

Welcome home to  
Benjamin Hanul,  
Son of Eugene and  
Michelle of  
Stouffville, Ontario

Welcome home to Ian,  
Son of Linxin and  
Rong of Mississauga,  
Ontario

Welcome home to  
Christopher  
Junhyeok, Son of  
Brian and Ina of  
Markham, Ontario

## THAILAND

Arrived August 26,  
2016 from the Thai  
Red Cross Children's  
Home in Bangkok,  
Thailand

William Tinpop, born  
June 14, 2013, son  
to Vinesh and Jill  
of Calgary, Alberta

## Waiting Children Program CHINA

Welcome home to  
Asher Yihong  
(Guangdong  
Province), son of  
Jason and Faye of  
Guelph, Ontario.

Welcome home to Drew  
Yan Hao (Jilin  
Province), son of  
Chad and Nancy of  
Ottawa, Ontario.

Welcome home to Eddy  
You Cheng (Anhui  
Province), son of  
Brian and Jennifer  
of Toronto, Ontario.



*Children's Bridge*